

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 ACDA-19 CIAE-00 INR-11

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3924

INFO AEC GERMANTOWN

US MISSION IAEA VIENNA 248

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 12334

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TECH, I

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE THERMONUCLEAR PROGRAM

1. THE NEW DELHI PRESS ON SEPTEMBER 05 CARRIED A UNITED NEWS OF INDIA (UNI) STORY REPORTI THAT INDIAN AEC CHAIRMAN H.N. SETHNA TOLD THE GUARDIAN CORRESPONDENT THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF INDIA'S PEACEFUL NUCLEAR TEST PROGRAM GOING NUCLEAR AT SOME FUTURE STAGE IS NOT RULED OUT.

2. THE GUARDIAN INTERVIEW INCLUDED DR. R. RAMANNA OF THE BHABA ATOMIC RESEARCH CENTER (BARC) WHO TOLD THE CORRESPONDENT THAT THERE WERE NO TECHNICAL PROBLEMS FOR INDIA IN PRODUCING A THERMONUCLEAR DEVICE. OTHER HIGHLIGHTS OF THE GUARDIAN INTERVIEW ATTRIBUTED EITHER TO SETHNA OR RAMANNA FOLLOW:

...THE 15 KILOTON RANGE OF THE MAY 18 EXPLOSION WOULD BE
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INSUFFICIENT TO FRACTURE OIL -BEARING STRATA 1,800 METERS

BELOW THE SURFACE. THIS WOULD REQUIRE A SMALL HYDROGEN DEVICE.

... FUSION TECHNOLOGY WOULD BE NEEDED IN THE NEXT GENERATION OF POWER PLANTS.

...THE RAJASTHAN EXPLOSION WAS EXCEPTIONALLY CLEAN. RESEARCHERS HAVE PICKED UP THE FIRST SIGNS OF RADIATION 35 METERS FROM THE DEVICE, BUT THE READINGS ARE NEGLIGIBLE AT THIS STAGE-- "LOWER THAN WE GET ON THE BEACHES OF KERALA."

...INDIA PLANS TO PROCEED WITH TEST EXPLOSIONS NEXT YEAR, BUT NO DATES HAVE BEEN SET PENDING EVALUATION OF THE FIRST TEST.

...CANADA'S SUSPENSION OF ATOMIC COOPERATION WOULD MAKE NO DIFFERENCE TO THE TEST EXPLOSION PROGRAM. (SETHNA HOWEVER ADDED THAT THE PROGRAM WAS ALREADY BEHIND SCHEDULE AND MIGHT BE DELAYED A YEAR OR TWO.)

...SETHNA AND RAMANNA ARE GOING TO THE IAEA LATER IN SEPTEMBER TO ARGUE THE CASE FOR PNES.

...THE ARGUMENT BY SOME NUCLEAR STATES INCLUDING BRITAIN THAT THERE CAN BE NO PNE CANNOT STAND UP.MOYNIHAN

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